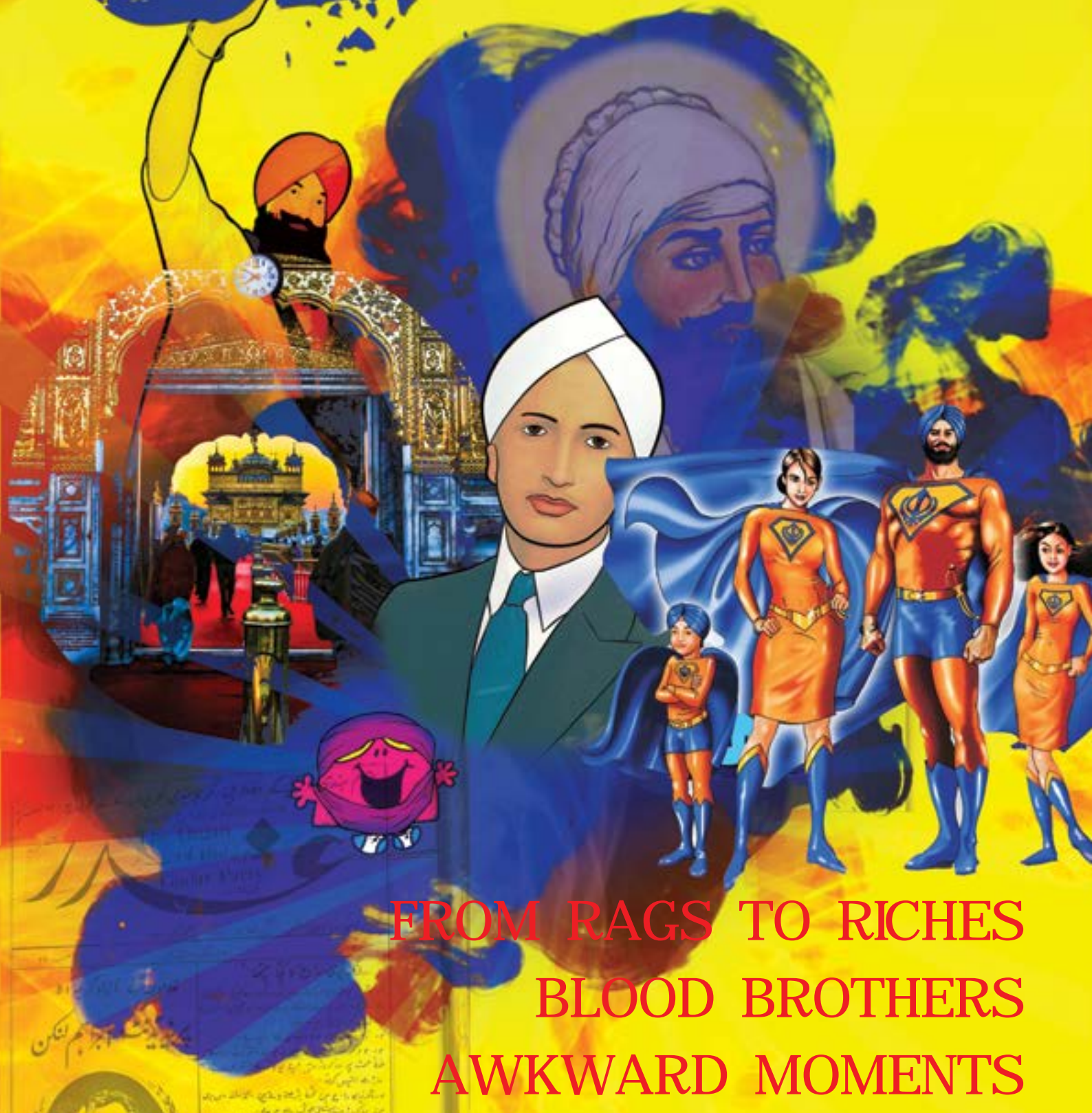


believe & achieve



FROM RAGS TO RICHES
BLOOD BROTHERS
AWKWARD MOMENTS

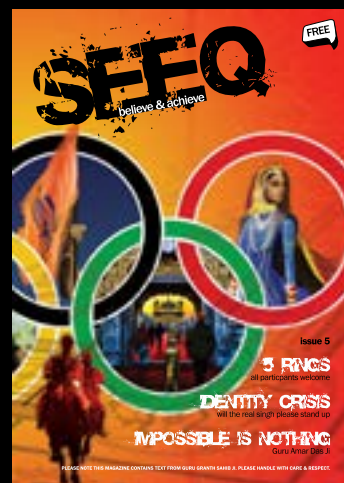
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SEEQ

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THE SEEQ TEAM

Six years ago we set out to hold a football tournament for our youth. We decided to try to do something that would possibly make a difference within our community and to try and instil some moral values. We had an idea to publish a leaflet that people could take away with them and read at their leisure. Little did we know, but SeeQ was born.

The fundamental nature of what we do is through our faith and taking guidance from Sri Guru Granth Sahib at every step. From what was just a football tournament born from our passion for football, with the SeeQ team having been to at least 10 champions league finals between them, we have ended up with a nationwide publication, the SeeQ magazine. Since our humble beginnings, we have gone from strength to strength. We have distributed over 100,000 hard copies and thousands more copies have been downloaded online. SeeQ has made it into schools, prisons and copies have been requested from abroad as far as Canada and the USA. We've managed to raise thousands of pounds for a variety of charities, both local and international, and built many partnerships with various organisations across the country, including Mann Brothers who kindly donated clothes for us to distribute among the less fortunate of us on the streets of Southall under the guidance of SWAT.

None of this could have been achieved without the blessings of all our readers and sponsors whose advertisements can be found in our magazines. However, the biggest blessing has to be from Guru Granth Sahib Ji who has guided us through the many challenges and obstacles that have been thrown in our way. Our next step forward sees us enter the world of technology. Although we already have a successful website which has been running since we started, we have now decided to enter the world of mobile communications. Our very own 'app' has been created to keep you in touch with SeeQ and will be launching in the next few days.

The new app will allow you to view all of our previous magazines, listen to and read the daily prayers for all Sikhs (nitnem), read the blessing of the day from Sri Harmandir Sahib (Hukamnama) or watch some of the other videos and podcasts we offer. It couldn't be any easier, simply go on to



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the Apple store or Android Play Store and download your very own SeeQ app. Don't forget to keep in touch by checking out our Facebook, Twitter or Youtube pages. More importantly, keep believing and keep achieving.

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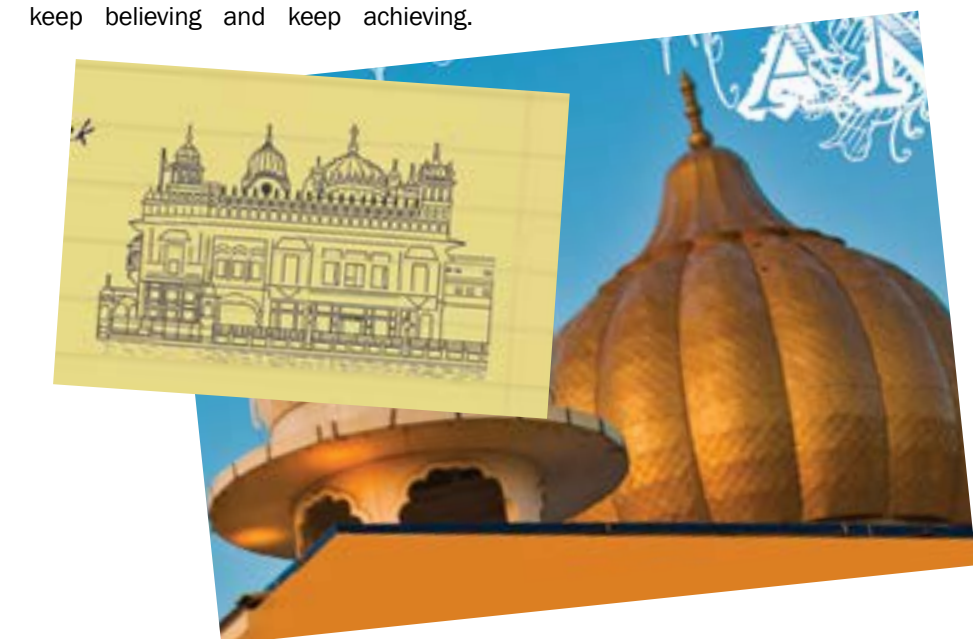
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May Guru Ji keep on blessing the Sangat to spread the word of Sikhi and support humanity.

We're all easily tempted by the ready mixed packs of Gulab Jamun in your local corner shop but to really impress the in-laws (and have your mother in law brag about you to all her friends), here's how to make everyone's favourite mithai from scratch....

You will need:
3 cups of dry milk powder
1 cup of semolina
1-2 teaspoons of butter (or ghee)
A pinch of baking powder
Half a glass of Milk
Handful of Sugar
Saucepan of Water

LITTLE MISS WHO



Survive the annual India visit

Gourmet Gulab Jamun!

1. Mix the milk powder, semolina and baking powder in a bowl and add the milk until the mixture turns a loose dough like consistency

2. Let this mixture rest for 30 minutes. While you're waiting (don't update your Facebook status yet...) in a saucepan boil the sugar and water together to make the sweet syrup. The sugar must be completely dissolved to be ready.

3. Shape the dough into small ping pong size balls (they will expand in size so be careful you don't end up with football sized gulab jamun!) Perfect gulab jamun should be completely smooth and have no cracks in them!

4. Shallow fry the gulab jamun in cooking oil on a very low flame for about 10-15 minutes. WARNING: Do not leave the kitchen (put Eastenders on record tonight)! Keep a close eye on the gulab jamun and turn them constantly so that they are an even colour.

5. Once cooked take them out one by one and let them rest for a minute before putting them into the syrup. Make sure the syrup is still warm when you add the gulab jamun.

6. Roll the gulab jamun in coconut flakes/shavings and you're done!

Serving suggestion: warm gulab jamun with cold vanilla ice-cream..yum!

P.S Good Luck... (You're gonna need it)

P.P.S If you're still having trouble, you're local mithai shop will be more than happy to sell you a box full to fob off as your own (just get rid of the packaging when you get home!).

Have you ever wondered what the Aunties at the back of the Gurdwara are so busy talking about all day long? Well, after spending a long Sunday eve's dropping, we've finally got the answers. Little did we know, they are fully clued up on who Roger Hargreaves' Little Miss Characters are, and have identified the likes of you and me. Are we marriage material or not? Here's a quick guide of who's who. Let's see who you can spot at the Gurdwara today.



MISS ASIANA FASHION

I'm the one who has to wear a new suit to each Gurdwara visit. I'm normally found traipsing round Soho road looking for the latest designs. Once at the Gurdwara I always make sure I have loads of pound coins so I can keep going up to the stage and showing off my suit.



MISS GOSSIP QUEEN

I'm the one who sits at the back of the Gurdwara amongst the bibia listening to that week's edition of "Gurdwara Gossip" including who's marrying who, who's lost weight, who's ate one too many allo waleh proteh, know everyone's family tree, dates of birth, shoe sizes and favourite sabji.



MISS SUNDAY

I'm the one who's always at the Gurdwara on a Sunday. Wearing the same suit, sitting in the same spot at the exact same time every week. I usually have a blank expression on my face and clock watch all morning waiting for my younger siblings to hurry up out of Punjabi class so I can go home and watch the Eastenders omnibus.



LITTLE MISS CANT COOK WONT COOK

I'm similar to Sunday girl but go on Wednesdays instead. I'm living away for Uni and Sikh Society all meet at the Gurdwara on a Wednesday and I only go because I don't know how to make roti and there is only so much toast and cereal you can eat.

MISS 'FIND ME A HUSBAND'

I'm the one who is desperate to find a husband. I watch all the guys walk in and if theirs any that tickle my fancy I go and speak to gossip girl to see if our favourite sabjia make us a perfect match. Unfortunately, I'm still single because no one likes pindia.



MISS PARSHAD 'N' GO

I'm the one who's too busy to even sit down. I leave my engine on, take my shoes off whilst running into the Gurdwara, push into the matha tek queue, grab my prashad and go! I'm the one with the battered car, I keep bumping it because I don't even get to wipe the thel off my hands from the prashad.



MISS I WISH I WAS POPULAR

"...I'm the one that sits with my back against the wall in the Gurdwara casually browsing Facebook. I have to make sure I check-in every time I'm at the Gurdwara and if you're on my Facebook and I see you, be warned, I will check you in too! Sometimes I'm so busy on my phone I forget to get up for the Ardaas which can be rather awkward..."



MISS WEDDING GIRL

"...I'm the one who only goes to the Gurdwara on weddings. I've been to loads of Gurdwareh depending on where the wedding is and each time I sit there wishing the bride would hurry up and stop crying so that I can go and party! After all, Gurdwareh are only there so we can get married in them..."



MISS PERFECT DAUGHTER IN LAW

Little Miss Perfect, the one that everyone wants for their own son, wasn't available for comment because she was too busy doing seva.

The Perfect daughter in law has no ego, she is not materialistic and goes to the Gurdwara on her own to find peace and be at one with Guru Ji. She goes to the Gurdwareh as much as she can; before or after work, whenever she gets the chance really. You'll find her at the Gurdwara when no one else is

1. If you are going to the airport with the intention that someone will help you take over the extra 90Kg of weight that you have in your luggage, forget it. They are all thinking the same about you.
2. Pack lots of 'Fair and Lovely'. Despite an average temperature of 600 degrees, you will still be expected to have milky white skin.
3. If you're thinking of packing all your favourite Patiala salwar suits so you fit in with the locals, don't. All the girls will be wearing the latest skinny jeans and high heels and look at you like you're weird.
4. Don't believe anyone who says the hole in the floor doesn't exist anymore. It does and we recommend you carry pocket sized Kleenex at all times.
5. Be prepared to be introduced to various greasy guys for the purposes of them getting a Visa. I mean getting married.
6. Take multiple packets of Badaam, Cashew Nuts and Raisins from the UK, and rightfully return them back to their county of origin.
7. Watch out for your mum filling up bags of your 'old' clothes to distribute to family members in India She will then return with brand new outfits of equal weight for just herself.
8. Don't forgot to tie brightly coloured strings all over your suitcase so it stands out amongst the rest but then theres still an awkward moment at the airport when every suitcase looks the same.
9. Do not collect up all old and useless mobile phones to give to your relatives. Their handsets will be more advanced then yours.
10. Once you're home, expect atleast 25 friend requests from people like Rimpay, Sweetu, Nikku and Pappu. Hometown: Jalandar.



Sikh Helpline

The 'Sikh Helpline' (0845 644 0704) or (0799900 4363) is a professional and confidential telephone counselling and email inquiry service where you can get help, advice, counselling and information on Sikhi and cultural issues. Since its founding in 1998, the Sikh Helpline has focused on providing a very personal service and in order to achieve this we have kept the Helpline relatively small and focused in the West Midlands area. However, the past few years has seen the service grow at an exponential rate with service users being spread throughout the country and in order to meet this need we have expanded our volunteer network to cover as much of the UK as possible.

We have recruited a management

team that has the credentials to ensure that the service runs smoothly and efficiently with core team members having experience in social work, psychology and Sikh philosophy. Other members have MSc's and experience covering a wide range of industries and sectors for specific advice including individuals with postgraduate qualifications in finance, criminology, medicine, law and pharmacy. This ensures we can offer expert advice from individuals with the correct credentials. Furthermore, our volunteer network comprises of diverse individuals who have experiences in many sectors from both genders across the age spectrum.

This uptake of volunteers has allowed us now to expand the Sikh Helpline into a national service where we can offer our services and advice throughout the UK to any individual that is suffering any form of personal distress. Our volunteers are on hand 24/7 and you can choose to speak to both males and f

emales whilst our growth ensures we can also ensure that the team can work very closely on your case with local knowledge.

The Sikh Helpline offers both a pro active and re active service where we help individuals who have suffered hardship or have become disillusioned with their faith through re active phone calls, meetings and email correspondence whilst we produce videos and talks on both our YouTube channels and throughout schools to ensure we have a pro active service addressing problems many members in the community face. In order to balance our growth with providing a strong personal service we have also set up a donations system where anyone can offer a 'Daswand' or any amount to help us continue our service and ensure we reach those who are most vulnerable. You can also help by offering us your time and expertise in a volunteer capacity where you can make difference to those individuals who most need your help.

COMPASSION IN ACTION

Earlier this year a young Sikh made headlines around the world in an episode which began on a social media website message board.

Balmeet Kaur was used as a target of ridicule because she chose to proudly follow the edicts of her faith and adorn her facial hair. The picture quickly became a hot topic, attracting both negative and positive responses but it was Balmeet's response which resonated with millions and attracted the attention of world media.

"Yes, I'm a baptized Sikh woman with facial hair," she wrote. "Yes, I realize that my gender is often confused and I look different than most women. However, baptized Sikhs believe in the sacredness of the body - it is a gift that has been given to us by the Divine Being (which is genderless, actually) and, must keep it intact as a submission to the divine will.

Many would have reacted with anger to such abuse however Balpreet chose to exercise the qualities which

make the inspiring Sikh the world has come to know. Her response exercised humility, emphasizing the focus of inner beauty.

"When I die, no one is going to remember what I looked like, heck, my kids will forget my voice, and slowly, all physical memory will fade away,"

"However, my impact and legacy will remain; and, by not focusing on the physical beauty, I have time to cultivate those inner virtues and hopefully, focus my life on creating change

"I'm not embarrassed or even humiliated by the attention [negative and positive] that this picture is getting because, it's who I am," Kaur wrote. And, she added, if you're out and about on the OSU campus, by all means come by and say hello"

This aspiring Neurosurgeons response led to an apology both on Reddit and in person, from the student who posted the photo. This then served as an opportunity to teach and eradicate the ignorance and stigma attached to female facial hair as well as highlighting the importance of treating the body as a temple decorated as God intended. Sometimes talking religion is easy, living it is a total different ball game. Sikhi teaches that religion is born from compassion; one cannot claim to be religious if they don't show compassion. Ms Balpreet Kaur is the definition Compassion in action.



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Gateway To Heaven

1 Harmandir Sahib

Harmandir Sahib Literally means "Temple of God". The Harmandir Sahib is a prominent Sikh Gurdwara located in the city of Amritsar, Punjab, India. The 4th Guru, Guru Ram Das Ji, started the construction of Sri Harmandir Sahib and Guru Arjan Dev Ji, The 5th Guru, completed the construction in 1604.

2 Beri Baba Buddha Ji

An old jujube tree standing in the parikrama or circumambulatory terrace along the northern bank of the sacred pool. It is here that the celebrated Baba Buddha, entrusted with the supervision of the digging of the tank, used to sit with his piles of digging tools and implements and other materials used for bricklining the sarovar and later for the construction of the Harimandir.

3 Sarovar

Sarovar is a Punjabi term used for a pool. A very large pool or Sarovar surrounds the central temple building. The devotees who visit will bathe in this pool as the Sikhs believe that spiritual and worldly benefits are gained by immersing in the holy waters of the Sarovar.

4 Gurdwara Dukh Bhanjani Beri

Stands on the eastern flank of the sarovar by the side of yet another jujube tree known as Dukh Bhanjani (lit. eradicator of suffering) Beri. The place is associated with the legend of Bibi Rajani whose leper husband was cured of his malady by having a dip in the old pond.

5 Ath-Sath Tirath

Past the Dukh Bhanjani Ber is a raised marble platform which is the Ath Sath Tirath, the Shrine of the Sixty-Eight Holy Places. To bathe near it, some believe, their dreams of visiting the 68 holy places of India will be fulfilled.

6 Baba Deep Singh Ji Shrine

Further along the parikarma, around the next corner, is the shrine of Baba Deep Singh, the legendary old warrior who died at this spot. Ever since, pilgrims have paused here to pray.

7 Gurdwara Lachi Ber

A small, domed structure raised upon a marblepaved platform near the gateway to the Harimandir, is named after the ber (jujube) tree by its side which yields small (lachi or cardamom sized) berries. According to tradition, Guru Arjan used to sit under this tree and watch the digging of the sarovar, the sacred tank.

8 Darshan Deori

Darshani Deori is an arch that stands at the shore end of the boardwalk. The door frame of the Darshan Deori extends to 10 ft in height and 8.6 ft in breadth. The panes of the door are festooned in an artistic manner. It leads to the boardwalk (bridge), which takes to the main shrine of Shri Harmandir Sahib.

9 Sri Akal Takhat Sahib

The Akal Takht (The Throne of the Timeless One) is the highest seat of temporal authority of the Khalsa. The Akal Takht was built by the 6th Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji as a symbol for political sovereignty of Sikhs. The Jathedar of the Akal Takhat is the highest spokesperson of the Sikh religion.

10 Gurdwara Thara Sahib

Gurdwara Thara Sahib commemorates Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit to Amritsar in 1664. Guru Tegh Bahadur had come from Bakala to pay homage at the Harimandir, but the priests in charge who belonged to the rival Mina sect shut the doors of the holy shrine in his face. Guru Tegh Bahadur then sat praying for some time at the spot now marked by Gurdwara Tharha Sahib and then went back towards the village of Valla.

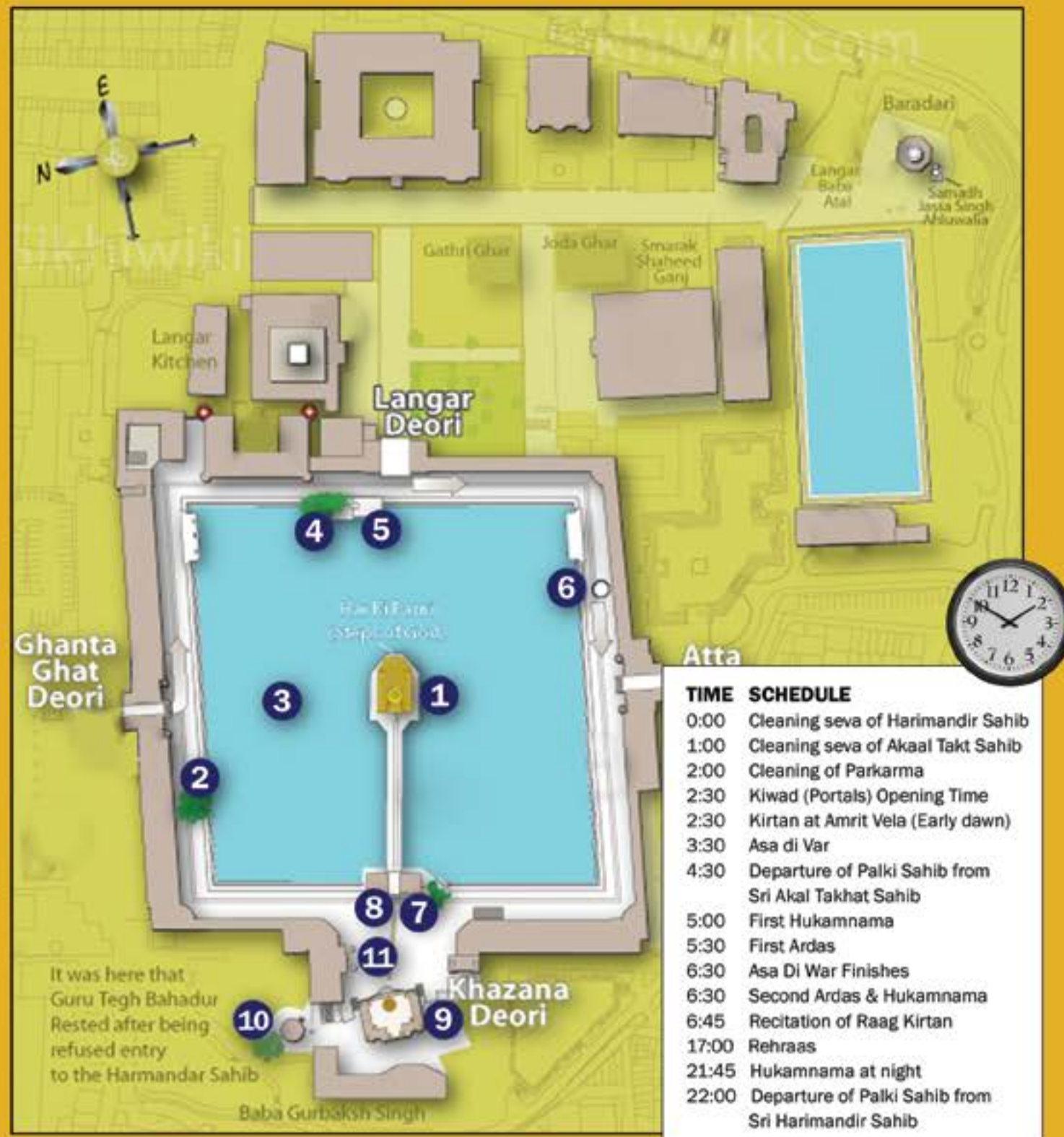
11 Nishaan Sahibs

The 2 Nishan Sahib were placed in front of the Akal Takht in 1606 by Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji. One to symbolize the concept of Miri or temporal authority and the second to symbolize the concept of Piri or spiritual authority.

"I have seen all places but none are comparable to you", said Guru Arjan Dev Ji whilst reflecting on the magnificence of Harmandir Sahib.

That first awe inspiring incline up the steps, when you catch the first glimpses of the 'Golden Temple'. Even if you know only a little about the history you can't help but be overwhelmed by the magnitude of 'pasts' that may have been. On entering you are met by the opulence of the white marbled floors, the beautiful glistening water surrounding the most beautiful architecture that words fail to justify. Each corner is rich in histories and stories and pains; the mind wonders around the various crevices on a journey of its own. Why is this majestic place so important? How did it come to be? What are all the stories? There's no better way than visiting there and finding out; use the daily schedule and take an active part rather than taking a back seat. Hopefully this map and schedule comes in handy.

Map of Harmandir Sahib



| TIME | SCHEDULE |
|-------|---|
| 0:00 | Cleaning seva of Harimandir Sahib |
| 1:00 | Cleaning seva of Akaal Takt Sahib |
| 2:00 | Cleaning of Parkarma |
| 2:30 | Kiwar (Portals) Opening Time |
| 2:30 | Kirtan at Amrit Vela (Early dawn) |
| 3:30 | Asa di Var |
| 4:30 | Departure of Palki Sahib from Sri Akal Takhat Sahib |
| 5:00 | First Hukamnama |
| 5:30 | First Ardas |
| 6:30 | Asa Di War Finishes |
| 6:30 | Second Ardas & Hukamnama |
| 6:45 | Recitation of Raag Kirtan |
| 17:00 | Rehraas |
| 21:45 | Hukamnama at night |
| 22:00 | Departure of Palki Sahib from Sri Harimandir Sahib |



Since launching in 2002 Walsall Sikh Forum is proud to have made a difference in the community it serves. Now successfully registered as a charity, we have been able to strive forward meeting the targets we set ourselves and much more. Having originally establishing ourselves to be a consultative forum we have strived in making and contributing in many decisions affecting Sikhs within our town.

By setting up links within our local council and government organisations, Walsall Sikh Forum are able to work and liaise in decisions affecting the Sikh community. Most recently of which was an issue affecting employees of Walsall Manor Hospital, who under new uniform policies meant that they would have to remove their Kara whilst at work.

After being contacted by various anxious employees, who were now being asked to remove their Kara from their wrists to reduce the spread of infection; we managed to raise this issue with the hospital management board; who initially stopped pressure being applied on employees. Employees were being asked to abide with the new uniform policy. After various consultations we came to the agreement that all Sikh employees will wear an arm cover over their Kara, reducing the risk of spreading infection. Overall a positive result for all of the Sikh employees.

Following on from this we have managed to raise the profile of the Sikh community within the hospital by organising monthly Sikh prayer days with the chaplaincy team. These are held on the first Wednesday of every month, along with our annual Vaisakhi and Bandhi-Shor Divas celebrations.

Having established these links we are now the first call for Walsall Council in issues regarding the Sikh faith, including Kirpan issues within colleges and schools, domestic violence and arrange marriage systems to name a few. We are now proud to declare that we are actively involved in Multi-faith forums, Black and Ethnic Alliances and various volunteer groups.

If you have any issues which are affecting you, Walsall Sikh Forum are here to help in any way possible. We are simply an email away to try and help.

Walsall Sikh Forum: Proud to be making a difference!

Sikh Forum: sikhforumwalsall@yahoo.co.uk

Jeet Kaur Sohal: j_k_sohal@yahoo.co.uk

Harvinder S Rai: harveyrai@hotmail.co.uk



GURDWARA SACHKHAND ISHER DARBAR VICARAGE ROAD, WEST BROMWICH, B71 1AQ



Founded by Sant Baba Mann Singh Ji (Pehowe Wale) in memory of Sant Baba Isher Singh Ji (Rara Sahib Wale)

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

The Gurdwara Sahib welcomes Sangat of all backgrounds regardless of caste, creed, colour or religion, with a vision to solely promote the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji Maharaj. The Gurdwara Sahib is free from any form of committee and all are welcome as sevadaars to participate and help us maintain the much-needed respect of our eternal Guru, Sahib Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji Maharaj. The Gurdwara Sahib operates on a purely voluntary basis and is open 24 hours a day all year round for all sangat to attend and seek the blessings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji Maharaj.

Weekly Sri Akhand Path Sahib Schedule

Monday 11:00 Arambh Sri Akhand Path Sahib
Wednesday 09:00 Bhog Sri Akhand Path Sahib
Wednesday 11:00 Arambh Sri Akhand Path Sahib
Friday 09:00 Bhog Sri Akhand Path Sahib
Friday 11:00 Arambh Sri Akhand Path Sahib
Sunday 11:00 Bhog Sri Akhand Path Sahib

Daily Schedule

04:00-05:00 Nitnem
05:00-17:00 Sri Akhand Path Sahib
17:00-18:00 Mool Mantar
18:15-18:45 Sri Rehras Sahib
18:45-19:15 Katha
19:15-19:30 Simran
19:30-20:00 Kirtan

Kids Programme (Saturday)

14:30-16:00 Gurmat / Gurbani Santhiya Class (6+)
16:00-17:00 Kids Kirtan and Simran
17:00-18:00 Chips & Pizza Langar

Bibiya Programme

Tuesday 11:00-13:30 Sri Sukhmani Sahib + Kirtan
Wednesday 11:00-13:30 Sri Chaupai Sahib + Kirtan

Sunday Schedule

10:30-11:00 Bhog
11:00-12:00 Kirtan
12:00-13:00 Katha
13:00-13:30 Mool Mantar
13:30-15:00 Sri Sukhmani Sahib
18:30-19:00 Sri Rehras Sahib
19:00-19:15 Sukhasan Sewa



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Bucket List

Bucket lists were made famous by Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman in a film where two terminally ill men escape from a cancer ward and head off on a road trip with a wish list of things to-do before they die.

The typical bucket list consists of places to visit, achieving goals, realizing dreams and overcoming fears. This got me thinking about things Sikhs should think about doing before they 'kick the bucket'. So here is my bucket list, I hope it inspires you to do something different.

Things to do before ya kick the bucket



1 Palki Seva at Sri Harmandir Sahib

In the morning or evening do Palki seva. This is where the Sri Guru Granth Sahib is taken from the Darbar Sahib to its resting place in the Akal Takhat. If time permits, book a room in the NRI building and stay the night.

2 Panj Takht Darshan

Go and visit the five supreme seats of the Sikh nation: Akal Takht Sahib, Kesgarh Sahib, Dandama Sahib, Hazoor Sahib and Patna Sahib. Visiting all five is a must for all Sikhs.

3 Holla Mohalla

Over a million people in one place celebrating an ancient Sikh warrior festival. Definitely a must see for all.

4 Langar Di Seva at Darbar Sahib

No better feeling than to give to those who need it most. Get stuck in and help feed the thousands who come on a daily basis.

5 Ishnaan at 5 sarovaars (holy waters) at Amritsar

Take a dip at not only Harimandir Sahib but also the other four sarovaars in Amritsar, taking away as many blessings as possible.



6 Jallianwala Bagh Memorial

Lay flowers at Jallianwala Bagh. On 13 April 1919, thousands of people gathered in the Jallianwala Bagh (garden) near the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar. The British opened fire on the crowd killing over a thousand people. Michael O'Dwyer, the British Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, had sanctioned the shooting and was later killed by Shaheed Udham Singh.

7 Turbanize

Wear a pagh for a week. It's interesting when a guy gets married he will wear a turban to the Gurdwara and everyone will say 'pagh boht sajdi' but if you are not looking to get married soon and haven't tried it, give it a go and you may surprise yourself by how good you look in your Levi 501s and a turban. My colour of choice is black, although the world is your oyster.

8 Something stupid for charity

Stretch yourself and make some money. Last year members of the SEEQ team completed the National Three Peaks Challenge to raise money for Khalsa Aid. Unforgettable! Get your own motley crew together for a ridiculous challenge of your own in aid of this worthwhile cause.

9 Taking Amrit

Fundamentally for every Sikh we must have the aim of one day taking Amrit from the Panj Pyaree. Start small; make small steps to further yourself on this path.

There are lots more that could be added and you may have some of your own to add. Learning Punjabi, jumping out of a plane or to visit the moon, to name just a few. Give it a go; you never know it may even change your life.

From A to B

We are constantly chasing peace and tranquillity, especially as we lead busier lives than ever before, but true peace is within us, we just need to find it.

In the beginning, each and every one of us is conceived in the eternal, everlasting source of creation that we know as God. Our purpose is to live a pure life of humility and peace and, most importantly, remember the almighty in everything we do. What's the point though?

The point is that we as humans are at the highest form of existence. We have been through millions of lives as many different creatures and now this is our chance to be free of that cycle of birth and death, and attain salvation.

God is the supreme-being, the parmatma or the everlasting soul. Our own soul, our atma is a part of God but it has been separated and we have fallen foul to material possessions, lust and greed. The point of this life is to become one with God, to purify our soul of these indiscretions and to merge with the almighty.

How can we do this? The answer lies within Gurbani:

This human body has been given to you. This is your chance to meet God. All other works are of no use. Join the holy congregation and meditate on the Name of God.

Ang 12

The Guru's word is what the Gurus spoke and reciting these words with

a true heart has the power to change one's consciousness and spirituality. Gurbani is a tool to focus the mind and cleanse the soul, and it is the ultimate way of fine tuning and protecting us from the five evils.

When one meditates and reads Gurbani, the true word of the guru itself enters our soul. It switches on a connection between our atma and parmatma, and the more we recite Gurbani and focus on its message of peace and humility, the stronger this connection will be. There will come a point where the darkness of ignorance and material deeds will vanish and we will reunite with God.

I am a sacrifice to my Guru, who has re-united me with my Creator Lord. I was separated from him for such a long time.

Ang 107

However, our material possessions and attachment to physical things are what weigh us down. The pleasures of life will come and go and the human body will eventually die but only one thing will remain present and that is our soul. If a person forgets this and wastes their life by allowing the physical world to become a barrier between God and the soul, the opportunity to reunite with God will be lost.

You may dress up, eat luxury food and apply scented oils to your body, but without meditating on God, your body shall surely turn to dust and you shall have to depart.

Ang 298

Bhagat Puran Singh devoted his whole life to helping the needy and less fortunate. Why? Gurbani had given him the power to see no one other than god in every person he treated. He cared nothing for money or fame, instead the pureness of his heart and his devotion to the word of the Guru was what guided him.

We are constantly chasing peace and tranquillity, especially as we lead busier lives than ever before, but true peace is within us, we just need to find it. So whatever the occasion or moment, Gurbani helps us find that peace and puts our mind at rest. Just like at school, when we begin studying it triggers a thirst for more knowledge and we each have this eagerness to learn and read more. In exactly the same way, we should have a desire to read more Gurbani and really understand our Guru's teachings. Once we let Gurbani become a part of us, only then will we reunite with God and find true peace.

Thousands of lives had been taken by an oppressive regime. Innocents killed, raped, burnt and generations wiped out. Any one reading this might think that I'm talking about Hitler's crusade against the Jews or the Apartheid movement against the black community in Africa. But I am actually referring to the Indian government crusade against Sikhs in Punjab. In the 1980s the Sikh nation proposed a resolution to the government for what they said was simply equal rights for fellow nationals. The Anandpur Sahib resolution wanted equal water, electricity, language and religious rights, to name a few. Sikhs also requested an amendment to Article 25 of the Indian constitution, which declares Sikhs are Hindus. These requests led to government oppression against Sikhs to silence their voice.

The 1980s and 1990s is said to have seen over two hundred thousand Sikhs killed in cold blood all over Punjab, predominantly in false encounters by the authorities. Punjab Chief Minister, Beanta, led police operations killing thousands of innocent Sikhs. Picking young Sikhs up from their homes and killing them in fake police encounters. At the time, Punjab Police included two young men by the names of Balwant Singh Rajoana and Dilavar Singh, who stood silently by watching the blood of fellow Sikhs spill. Being unbearable to watch, they decided to save the lives of innocents by taking the life of Beanta in 1992. Dilavar Singh died whilst avenging the death of thousands of Sikhs, and possibly preventing the deaths and rapes of thousands more.

Bhai Rajoana still languishes in jail to this day. He has now served longer in prison than many people serving multiple death sentences, yet it is still unclear what crime he had committed. Even though he might be physically imprisoned, it would be safe to assume that his spirit is free. He has continuously welcomed the death penalty and accepted his fate with open arms. He would rather die standing than to live the rest of his lives on his knees as a second class citizen.



MARTYRS ON

Bhai Rajoana was subsequently arrested in 1995, and has been imprisoned ever since. Last year after seventeen years in jail he was given the death penalty. Since which we have seen the innocent lives of many Sikhs still being taken, without any indications of justice. Bhai Rajoana has continuously refused to appeal his sentence, as he refuses to bow down to a corrupt legal system. Nor has he appointed a law, challenged any evidence or accepted a state lawyer. He sees no purpose in appealing to a state which is actually the perpetrator.

Last year saw a wave of orange over the world. Sikhs from all over the world came together to create such a force, that the government of India gave stay to Bhai Balwants Singhs hanging. Whether or not he will ever be hung in silence like Afzal Guru is something that no one can be sure of. The only thing that we know is that thousands of Sikhs still languish in jails without a fair trial; some have served decades without actually committing a crime. The request of Bhai Balwant Singh Rajoana has always been to simply come together as one and for Sikhs to continue to hoist an orange Nishan sahib and wear orange. If we all come together we can make a difference. If we can't do anything else, let's keep pledging orange..... Nothing is impossible.

" I LEARNED THAT COURAGE WAS NOT THE ABSENCE OF FEAR, BUT THE TRIUMPH OVER IT. THE BRAVE MAN IS NOT HE WHO DOES NOT FEEL AFRAID, BUT HE WHO CONQUERS THAT FEAR "

(NELSON MANDELA)

One hundred years ago far from the shores of what was then Hindustan, a small group of proud nationalists decided to save their homeland. Punjabis left their motherland under the clutches of the British regime and landed on various shores around the world.

One such person was a fifteen year old boy by the name of Kartar Singh Sarabha. Arriving in America in 1912, Kartar Singh went through rigorous questioning, during which he was told that "coming from a country of slaves, Indians are treated as slaves wherever they go", implying that Indians are slaves to the British in their own country. Hearing these words left an everlasting sour taste with young Kartar.

For the next three years those sour words of the immigration officer would run through his head, the

to save their homeland. They started to print a paper called The Gadhar, which was distributed to Indians all over the world. The sole purpose of the paper was to unmask the truth about British rule over Indians, hoping to create awareness and uproar against the tyranny that they were being put through. This would later be known as the Gadhari movement, and, little did they know at the time, this movement would begin the demise of British rule in India.

With the start of World War I in 1914, the British became thoroughly engrossed in their war effort. Thinking it to be a good opportunity, the leaders of the Ghadar Party published the "Decision of Declaration of War" against the British in an issue of 'The Ghadar' dated 5 August 1914. Thousands of copies of the paper were distributed all over the world.

**"PUT AT STAKE
EVERYTHING FOR THE
FREEDOM OF THE COUNTRY"**

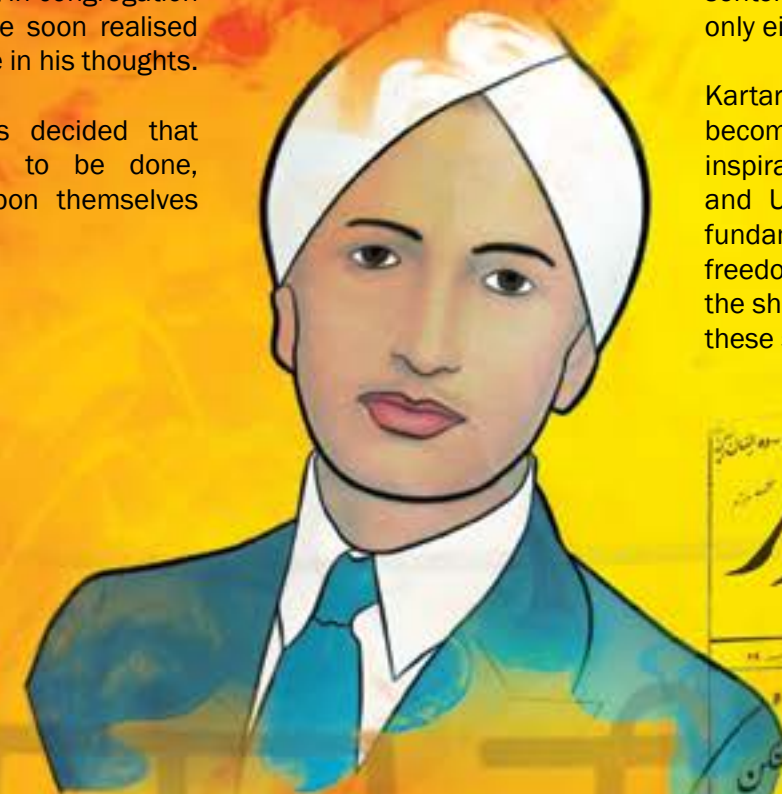
Seizing this opportunity, eighteen year old Kartar Singh, a man who practiced what he preached, decided to return to India to fight for the freedom of his country, along with other members of the Ghadar Party. Kartar Singh and other freedom fighters started to fight back to retrieve parts of India from the British. The movement was in full swing, with many other Indians returning from overseas to fight against the British. A revolt was planned all over to take place simultaneously, hoping to topple the British Empire.

Like every movement, there is always an informer within the ranks. A man by the name of Kirpal had been planted by the British within The Ghadar Party, and on March 2nd 1915 Kartar Singh Sarabha was arrested. After being imprisoned and tried in court, Kartar admitted all of his part in this revolutionary movement. When questioned about his choice of sentence, either death or life imprisonment, Kartar Singh asked for death. He was then sentenced and hung at the age of only eighteen and a half.

Kartar Singh Sarabha went on to become a national hero; he was the inspiration for the likes of Bhagat and Udham Singh, who played a fundamental part in the fight for freedom. Kartar Singh fought to free the shackles of his people, but have these shackles really been lifted?

constant thought of his fellow countrymen being slaves in their own country. Whilst in congregation with other Sikhs, he soon realised that he wasn't alone in his thoughts.

These young Sikhs decided that something needed to be done, so they took it upon themselves



If someone was to mention the phrase 'from rags to riches' some of the older community might recall a film released in the 1980's or a recent Forbes richest men in the world list; who have gone from sleeping on the street to billion dollar mansions.

Unfortunately for many, wealth is now determined by the size of a house, the car we drive and the amount of money we have in our bank accounts. However, there was a time when one was considered wealthy when in good health and living prosperously.

In 1581 a child was born by the name of Jetha in the city of Lahore. Shortly after his birth both of his parents passed away. In the days that many believed in witchcraft and curses, the doors of the village were firmly closed whenever this young boy would walk the streets. Close family and relatives wanted nothing to do with him. Children were told that they were not to play with this child, as he was a boy who had brought hardship, death and despair since his birth. He was the sole reason his parents had left this world and was cursed.

The boy had no option but to leave the village; he had no friends, no family, no support and no money. His grandmother saw this and decided to take him away from the streets of Lahore and took him to Amritsar. To make ends meet, Jetha sold corn for a living, making little money but enough to survive. This young boy had rare qualities, qualities that made him stand out from the rest. There was no self pity, no enmity towards those who turned against him in his home city and a selflessness attitude to help those who were less fortunate than him. His grandmother had instilled qualities in this young boy, qualities that those who refused to help him lacked; to love, to share and care for those less fortunate. Jetha travelled on many holy pilgrimages

to bathe in holy waters and he began using the money raised from selling corn to feed the holy and poor, even though he had little himself.

As time passed Jetha continued to sell his corn and slowly established himself as a member of the village Basarke (Amritsar). A large population of this village was one day going on a pilgrimage to Gobindwal and so the young man decided to attend the city by joining the villagers. Whilst there, he had the pleasure of meeting a man by the name of Guru Amar Das Ji, who the villagers had come to pay homage to. The Guru was a compassionate loving man, and knew of the problems that Jetha had faced all his life. He showed him the love equivalent to both a mother and a father. Several days later the

villagers decided to leave the city to head back home. Emotionally overwhelmed from the love he had received, the young man's heart desired to stay with the Guru for a while longer. He had seen people do selfless seva, help each other and share love; a world which he was unaware existed as his life had only seen hardship and selfish attitudes with people striving to meet only their own needs. So he decided he would stay.

His heart was at its most content when he was serving others and so he spent minute after minute serving Guru Amar Das Ji and those who came to see the Guru. Seeing this pleasant manner and devotion, Guru Amar Das decided to marry Jetha to his daughter, Bibi Bhani. Bibi Bhani also served Guru Amar Das Ji with pure love and devotion

making the two a perfect match for each other.

Some time passed and life was a joy. Jetha continued on serving the congregation and the Guru. He was also taking a lead role in the construction of the Gurdwara now known as Baoli Sahib. The Gurdwara is famous for its eighty four steps, where if bathed in the correct method a person is saved from going through the 8.4 million life cycles ever again.

One day, whilst Jetha was carrying a basket of sand on his head, an old man approached him. The man asked him the whereabouts of a young man called Jetha from the city of Lahore. The old man explained that the man he was looking for was now married to the daughter of Guru Ram Das Ji and that he was his

maternal uncle. Jetha's face lit up, the very people who had once thrown him on the street had now travelled miles to see him. However, he had no ill feelings of anger, disappointment or resentment towards them, as Guru Amar Das Ji had only taught him the path of love.

"That is me" he replied. The man looked at Jetha with his clothes covered in mud, a basket of sand on his hand and said "Shame on you, you're the son of a Khatri and look at the state of you". A bemused Jetha looked on. The man continued to say, "When your parents passed away, why didn't you die with them too, rather than bring shame on our family?" A stunned Jetha looked on unsure of how to respond. Close by was Guru Amar Das Ji, listening to everything that was

being said. "This man is the saviour of your family, you say this man brings shame on you, little do you know this man will spread the name of the Sodhi family to the rest of the world!" Shortly after this, Jetha, if you haven't worked it out already, was given the next Guru ship of the Sikhs. His love, selfless service and kind devotion to Guru Amar Das Ji was a beacon for the rest of the congregation and Bhai Jetha soon became Guru Ram Das Ji, after being ordained as the fourth Guru of the Sikhs.

The same young man, who was once an orphan selling corn on the streets, was now the Guru of the Sikhs. From having no home, no shelter and no food, Guru Ram Das Ji now provides shelter and food to the world. His sanctuary known as Harimandir Sahib is now the home to thousands, feeding thousands daily. Whilst he was a young man nobody found a place in their hearts for him; however, now the whole world has a place for Guru Ram Das Ji in their hearts, as every Sikh strives to visit Harimandir Sahib at least once in their life and it is the central point of our faith. From having no money to survive, his humble abode is now covered in gold. From having no one listen to his problems, the whole world now bows to his feet with their own.

This just goes to show that with true devotion and true love for the Guru anything is achievable. True wealth is earned through selfless service, love and compassion and not through the size of our bank balance.

THE WAY OF LIFE

There are many stages that one goes through in life; Guru Granth Sahib Ji also reflects on this. Here we have created a quick time line of the different stages and ceremonies in life that one should go through. The top half of the time line shares and reflects on a shabad of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. This shabad tell us how the mindset of a person changes throughout life; from birth right through to death, something which we will all most likely be familiar with. The bottom half tells us about the ceremonies and the actions that a Sikh should do in their life.

First, the baby loves mother's milk;
Second, he learns of his mother and father;

Fifth, he runs after food and drink;
sixth, in his sexual desire, he does not respect social customs.

Ninth, he turns grey, and his breathing becomes labored;
tenth, he is cremated, and turns to ashes.
Ang 137

Third, his brothers, sisters-in-law and sisters;
Fourth, the love of play awakens.

Seventh, he gathers wealth and dwells in his house;
eighth, he becomes angry, and his body is consumed.



Birth Ceremony / Janam Sanskar

First thing baby consumes is Amrit prepared by a Singh who recites Japji Sahib whilst stirring a Kirpan in a small iron bowl that is filled with water & a few Patase (sugar & glucose crystals). Five drops of the Amrit are administered to the baby and then the mother drinks the remaining Amrit and can proceed to breast feed the baby. The word Vaheguru is recited as is the Mool Mantar to imprint this upon the new born.

When possible the baby is to be taken to the Gurdwara and a Hukamana taken, the first letter of the Hukmanama determines the first letter of the baby's name

Education

You should get educated in Gurmukhi - the language of the Guru's & Gurbani, alongside this normal schooling is to be undertaken. Making Sikhs both spiritual and a success in the world.

Baptism Ceremony/Amrit Sanskar

Sikhs should take Amrit before marriage if possible. Refraining from cutting hair, eating meat, entering relationships outside of marriage and refraining from any form of intoxication.

Wearing the 5 k's at all times to combat the five evils

Kes - Ego is subdued, submitting humbly to God's will

Kangha - combing your Kes will remind you to remain detached from the world, tackling attachment

Kara - wearing it reminds you to keep your greed in tact

Kirpan - wearing it reminds you to control your anger & only use it preserve honour

Kachera - reminds you of your commitment to chastity

Wedding Ceremony/Anand Sanskar

Getting married in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, making an oath of marriage and commitment. Vowing to live a married life according to the principles of Sikhi.

After which most people then set up their households

Death Ceremony/ Atam Sanskar

You leave the earth and go to your next destination. You reap what you have sowed - this determines your next birth or freedom from the cycle of reincarnation.

The only thing that is definitely of essential use to us at death is the Seva & Simran we have done in our lives. If we remember God throughout our lives - we will be rewarded and with concerted efforts we will one day become one with us.

In reality millions come and go - we should try our best to become unique and not follow the pack like sheeps. But rather become Lions & Princesses as Guru Jee wants us to be



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16 BOSS

LOST

As a side's person for the Church of England I was always religious, inquisitive and forever asking questions; however, something was always missing. My life was turned upside down in a matter of days. My aunt and brother committed suicide within days of each other and then my Nan passed away a day later. Out of a job, no money, a failed marriage and a child to look after, I was wrapped in grief.

I read the eulogies at the funeral for both but nothing could console me and for the first time in my life I felt that I was alone. Turning to alcohol, I was eventually hospitalised with post-traumatic stress, violent headaches and a drink problem. **Now at rock bottom, alcohol seemed the solution to the pain and God was nowhere to be found. After a failed attempt at taking my life, where could I turn? Who could help me?**

One Saturday afternoon I planned to meet a friend at a Hindu temple in Wolverhampton. On arrival I took my shoes off and covered my head. Looking around I thought, Hindus don't wear turbans! I then realised I wasn't in a Mandir, I was actually in Sedgley Street Gurdwara! The TomTom had definitely failed me on that day.

Having taken down the correct directions, I decided to have a look around. Following the lead of others I ended up in the main congregation room. **For some strange reason, even though I was an outsider, I felt at home. My mind felt at peace for the first time in months.** I felt God and I began to cry. There was a hymn being sung at the time which brought a warm melting feeling in my heart. I later found that the hymn was:

*You are my father and my mother.
You are my relation and my brother.
You are my Guardian everywhere so why
fear any distress or anxiety? ||1||
By your Grace I have recognized you.
You are my shelter and my honour.
Without you there is none other; the
entire Universe is your playground. ||2||
Ang 103*

I later wondered whether this was all an accident or fate. I don't want to sound like I had a major epiphany or I came out of the Gurdwara healed with a different perspective in life. But from that moment on my outlook on life was different. I focused on my job, stopped drinking and went back to college. Slowly I got on my feet, bought a new home and began a new stage in my life.

I also started attending my local Gurdwara with my daughter and Sikhi became our way of life. Two years ago I decided to take the identity of a Sikh and tied my first turban. **A saintly Sikh told me that this path was going to be hard, but I had the strength to walk it. I'm not perfect, I make mistakes and at times it's difficult, especially with language and cultural barriers. However, the rewards and love I feel from Waheguru Ji are worth it.**

Now I know he is definitely there, he provided the answers I needed, so I will keep walking this path, learning more daily, sometimes making mistakes, sometimes getting it right. All I can do is thank god for my TomTom failing.

Nowadays, it is not unusual to see young boys and girls desperate to start university so that they can move away for a few years and leave their family, morals and sometimes even their Sikhi behind. Whilst I was at university, I remember the Sikh Society always having some kind of event, but looking back, the only real time me and my friends managed to attend the Gurdwara was to pray that our last minute all nighters would save us from the behina at home and it was quite clear we weren't the only ones (and just to add - it did work!)

This led me to think about my relationship with Sikhi and fundamentally with Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Do I really have a relationship or is it just a one way street, with me always asking and taking in my time of need? Do I fit in going to the Gurdwara whenever I can or is it just whenever I need to?

I know that Guru Ji is everywhere. Whatever I am doing, wherever I am, Guru Ji is watching over me. Whenever I need to find peace, direction, or in times of need I find myself gravitating towards Guru Ji and asking for guidance and whilst this is all well and good, it is saddening to realise that for many years I only remembered Guru Ji when I needed help or when particular events took place in my life.

Now making a more conscious effort to go to the Gurdwara and reading about our great history, I came across a story which made me

feel at ease, whilst still trying to find my feet with Sikhi. The story relates to a man called Makhan Shah Labana, a trader by profession. Makhan Shah was also a Sikh and one day, whilst going about his daily duties he came across some great difficulty. Whilst transporting his goods across the sea, his ship was hit by a storm. His boat began to sway and came very close to toppling. For Sikhs generally these were times of great disorder because at this point it was still unknown who the Guru was. Guru Har Krishan Sahib Ji had not appointed a successor to his throne, simply giving an indication of the next Guru's location. Nevertheless, not knowing who the physical identity of the Guru, this did not deter Sikhs to pray to their Guru for protection and guidance.

Makhan Shah prayed for his own safety, folding his hands and doing an Ardas, promising to deliver gold coins to the Guru when he landed at shore. Cutting a long story short, Makhan Shah was saved, and on

arrival to the village Bakala; in the midst of the countless fake Gurus, Guru Tegh Bahadur was found. My point here is that Makhan Shah didn't know who the Guru was. He had blind faith. He had never seen Guru Tegh Bahadur, in fact he had never even heard of him. But one thing he did know was that the Guru was out there somewhere, listening to his prayers.

Reading this story, I could relate to Makhan Shah. I have never had the relationship that I should have with Guru Ji, never really made time to go to the Gurdwara unless there was a real purpose or function and, more often than not, I only turned to Guru Ji in my times of need. We are all guilty of flocking to the Gurdwara when we all need that little extra help or we simply want to find peace and de-stress. At times like these, our faith seems to increase and we all remember our Guru Ji because we know the power of Sikhi and that Guru Ji will answer our prayers. It's fair to say that we can all relate to Makhan Shah in one way or another.

Even though many of us might feel that only going to the Gurdwara for formalities, Guru Granth Sahib Ji is still always there for us and, unknowingly, our prayers are being answered. Many of us may feel that we are not ready for this path, it isn't practical or we simply don't know how to take the next step on the path. Despite all the excuses, we can all take small steps to gradually increase our love for Sikhi and incorporate this into our daily lives. The positive effects that these small steps have on our lives will naturally make us want us to learn more and try to better ourselves each day. Even the smallest of changes can help, such as: going to the Gurdwara on a daily basis, changing what we listen to (change the Dr Dre track for some Simran!) whilst driving in the car or going for a jog, doing a little seva or even attend one of the classes available at the Gurdwara. Although even these tiny steps can seem daunting to start with, once you give it a go, it will be plain sailing after that - you have my word for it, and more importantly, the Guru's.

MY MYSTERY AND I

Big Fat Sikh Wedding

Proposed? Now you're preparing for your big fat Sikh wedding?

Outfits, hall; book hall first, OMG! Got to focus around that! Ummm ,shraab and choc fountain.... Hmmm, now what's next, flipping hell-Cars,- forgot DJ Dholis? Blimey, that was close! Honn kee reh gaya - Gurdwara? - oh Mum & Dad can sort that!.... Sound familiar? Should that be your list of priorities? The marriage bit is actually the Gurdwara - isn't it?

So what does it actually mean to be married in front of Guru Maharaj in Anand Karaj. Well, 'Anand Karaj' literally means 'blissful union' - we conduct this to ask for our union to be blessed as we promise to be Gurmukh.

Why was the Anand Karaj created? And by whom?

Lavan hymns were compositions of Guru Raam Das, written for his own wedding to Bibi Bhani and have since been adopted as part of the ceremony to provide newlyweds with guidelines in accordance with Sikhi, formula for a successful marriage. Pretty forward thinking of Guru Ram Das - who needs marriage councillors.... Haha!

So how does it all start?

First - Ardas- Bride, groom, parents are upstanding clasped hands. After the ardas the keertani sing, Keeta Loree-al Kaam - "Tell Your Wishes to the Lord" to commence the Anand Karaj. This advises the couple that a successful union is assured by a selfless attitude centred around Sikhi.

Next - Palla - The bride's father hands the sash, worn over the shoulder of the groom into the bride's hands as Palla shabd is sung. *-This is the bit when all the girls in the sangat look for their Dad's and have a little cry!-*

On to - Laava - The couple walk in tow around Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji four times at set intervals. The priest will read Laav from Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, accompanied by musicians. *-This is the bit when the bride's brothers help hubby keep her moving! -*

Then - Ardas - The congregation stand and join in ardas followed by Hukamnama.

Finally - Kara Parshad - Blessed "Sweet pudding" is served. This ends the formal part of the wedding. *-This is the bit where all the kids go nuts!-*

What does the Lavan Shabd tell us?

- 1 - Meditate the Lord's Name; Naam jaapna.
- 2 - The Lord leads you to meet the True Guru.
- 3 - The mind is filled with Divine Love. I speak the Word of Lord's Bani.
- 4 - My mind is peaceful; I have found the Lord.

When the couple circle the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji each time they're making a commitment to God with the Guru as spiritual witness. As they circle they are reminded that the Guru should be the centre of life, from which springs your spiritual guidance and understanding that you require for your journey together. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is the centre and Sadh Sangat your worldly witness and support. This has relevance to the occasion and should not be considered a ritual without meaning.

Guru Ram Das gave us guidelines to live within and blessed us with 4 commandments to start our married life. It's so easy to get distracted by the glam side of the wedding, but the significant part of the day is that the union be blessed by our living guru in front of Sadh Sangat and we promise to live and lead a life with a strong emphasis on Sikhi.



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awkward moments



Indy Bilkhu

the awkward moment when you don't finish all the sabji in your thaal and the Bibi in the kitchen gives you a dirty look

Suky Kaur Was it pindiya? No wonder you didn't finish them!

Saby Sanghera Please tell me it wasn't saag u left...even Popeye finishes that!

SEEQ Singh Kaur Good on her! Only joking, she's only giving you a dirty look because you might not know it but even Langar is blessed by Guru Ji and shouldn't be thrown away. After the Ardaas, small portions of the Langar for that day are blessed and then mixed in with the Langar that is served to be served to the entire Sangat...



Pammi Dhaliwal

The awkward moment when you get to the Gurdwara and realise you left your chunni/ramaal at home...

Kilran Sehra Ha ha! you'll have to ask the Bibi at the Gurdwara if she'll lend you one!

Raji Kaur If you're just doing a quick matha tekh you'll be alright I think...

SEEQ Singh Kaur You shouldn't enter a Gurdwara without having your head covered. Truthfully, Sikhs should have their heads covered inside and outside of the Gurdwara. In a Gurdwara, the particular importance of covering your head is that it shows humility and respect towards Guru Ji. Covering our heads in front of Guru Ji also shows modesty and a respectable character. It will also help to save embarrassment on bad hair days!



Terjinder Choda

The awkward moment when it's your turn to matha tekh and you realise you have no change...

Harpeet Singh What a cheapskate!

SEEQ Singh Kaur Our relationship with our Guru Ji is such that as our Guru Ji gives us everything and always listens to our prayers, out of respect we should never go to greet our Guru Ji empty handed. It's not compulsory to put money in the golakh; you can take a bottle of milk and some teabags if you want!

Sunny Singh Don't forget you owe me a tenner too!

SEEQ Singh Kaur Guru Nanak Dev Ji introduced the concept of 'dasvandh' which sets out that Sikhs should contribute one tenth of their earnings towards seva in the community. It is stated in gurbani that "One who works for what he eats, and gives some of what he has - O Nanak, he knows the Path"



Bobby Dehal

The awkward moment when you forget to stand up for the Ardaas...

Aarti Sembhi Did you fall asleep?!

SEEQ Singh Kaur Do you know the purpose of the Ardaas? It's to ask Guru Ji for his protection and requesting the welfare and prosperity of all mankind. Ardaas is also said to ask Guru Ji to watch over us when we are about to embark on a new journey and also to say thanks for the completion of a journey.

Jaspreet Jagpal I remember I couldn't stand up once because I had really bad pins and needles but my mom dragged me up and I leaned on her ☺

SEEQ Singh Kaur You're supposed to stand up! Whenever a formal Ardaas begins, the entire Sangat should stand before Guru Ji with folded hands. The purpose of standing before Guru Ji for this part of the prayers is because in an Ardaas we are asking for something from a higher authority. During the Ardaas we are also taking an oath to follow the right path and free our minds



Manpreet Aujla

The awkward moment when you get told off for sitting on a chair in the back of the Diwan Hall...

Sanjeevan Singh Why were you sitting at back? You'll be waiting ages for your prashard there!

Sunny Kaur Ha ha I saw you getting told off - shame!

SEEQ Singh Kaur On a serious note, chairs/stools are not permitted in the Diwan Hall. The Guru Granth Sahib is our living Guru and has the highest spiritual authority. Sangat visiting the Gurdwara should sit on the floor, cross-legged because pointing your feet towards Guru Ji is assign of disrespect. Sitting on the floor also symbolises equality amongst all people and is also the traditional posture for meditation as it allows you to enjoy the prayers with greater concentration.

Kam Kaur You're so lazy! Even my Bibi who's always complaining about her godeh sits on the floor!

SEEQ Singh Kaur However, having chairs permanently located at the back of the Diwan Hall will undoubtedly attract Sangat (who are usually capable of sitting on the floor) to sit there simply for the sake of comfort and convenience which needs to be discouraged.

Manpreet Aujla Oh thanks for that guys! I'll definitely be sitting on the floor from now on.



Anita Pahal

The awkward moment when you take the wrong shoes home from the Gurdwara...

Bobby Rehal Erm...yeah that is awkward...

Raj Hayre Urghhhh that's minging!

Dimple Kaur My mom lost her shoes! They were pink, flowery flip flops - did you take them???

Anita Pahal (embarrassed face) I'll bring them round later...



Manjit Mann

OMG! Just came back from the Gurdwara where I saw a fight! Apparently there was an interfaith marriage taking place and some local's stopped it! and rightfully so....

Amandeep Singh No way!

Good on them, no one should disrespect our Guru Ji like that..

Dilpreet Sandhu I'm confused...I thought the Gurdwara was open for everyone and anyone can go and eat Langar etc? All Gurdwareh have four doors don't they to symbolise that the Gurdwara is open to anyone? If it is then why create such a fuss about different faiths getting married

SEEQ Singh Kaur Sikhi is open to everyone. The Anand Karaj is one the main ceremonies that all Sikhs should go through, along with the other ceremonies such as the Amrit Sanchar. If one doesn't intend to take part in the other ceremonies than they shouldn't go through the Anand Karaj. They must also accept the Guru Granth Sahib as their Guru and Sikhi as their path in life. In regards to the Gurdwara being open to all, this is 100% correct. Harmandir Sahib is open to the world, but that doesn't give some one the right to go there and change the current daily protocol. Like wise, all Gurdwareh are open to all, but it doesn't give somebody the right to amend the rules to meet their own needs.

Pavanjit Gill You can be any colour to get married in a Gurdwara as long as you are both boy and girl are Sikh in faith. It's not that confusing really, its just the same as only two Catholics being able to get married in a Catholic church and only two Muslims being able to get married in a Mosque...

Gupt Sevdar: If someone does want to marry another faith there is always the civil ceremony option - there is no excuse to disrespect the Gurdwara for your own personal gain.

Fateh Singh We as Sikhs are fully supportive of inter-race marriages however surely inter-faith has no place in the Gurdwara. If you have two people of different religions does it not make sense to have a civil wedding? No one is saying you can't get married out of faith that's your own personal choice, just don't involve the Gurdwara.



Paul Jenkins

The awkward moment when you go to a Sikh wedding and everyone is sober....

Andrew Smith I recently got invited to one of my work colleagues wedding. He is sikh, I tel you what it was amazing, ive never seen anything like it. Free booze, food and lavish decorations. It was wild... You Sikhs definitely know how to throw a party!

Jason Singh Andrew this how us Sikhs roll!! We would drink anyone under the table...

SEEQ Singh Kaur Andrew its glad to hear you had a good time. However, Sikhs are not allowed to consume alcohol but due to cultural influences, we have unfortunately developed this "label" amongst many western counter parts. In terms of religion, the most important part of the Sikh wedding takes place at the Gurdwara (temple).

Andrew Smith Yeah I do have another friend who is Sikh and doesn't cut his hair, eat meat or drink alcohol. Attending this wedding was a little confusing in all honesty! But thanks for clarifying that. I guess my work colleague wasn't a practicing Sikh.



Harry Rai

the awkward moment when your Bibi slaps you for wanting to marry out of caste...

Amrit 'Jatt' Bhandal Fair play to your Bibi. JATT & PROUD!

Raja Sehra You Jatt's think you're all the best.

SEEQ Singh Kaur Don't be offended but your Bibi is clearly not with the times. This is a traditional cultural thing and clearly a thing of the past. Sikhi doesn't believe in the caste system we are all equal. It is our job to abolish this old school way of thinking

Pritti Viridi. Yo "Amrit you Jatt's thinking you're so good. TK for life! Bet you've never done any farming in your life, what do you work as? Let me guess LT? Badha Jatt aiya.

TIME WAITS FOR NONE

Throughout my life I have always heard that there are three main principles in the Sikh way of life. To meditate and remember god at all times, to earn an honest living and to share what we earn with those who need it. But there is one question that has always confused me: what really is meditation?

*With each and every breath, he constantly remembers the Lord in meditation;
Not a single breath passes in vain.*

(Guru Amar Das, Bhaagura, 556)

Is it the devotional repetition of the word "Vaheguru" with every living breath? Is it singing it during kirtan? Or is it sitting at home and reciting on my bed? What posture should I hold? How can we bring about such meditative poise? Is it even possible? Or is it merely the talk of fables and folklore? These questions are some of which cross all of our minds, but the thing to always remember is that it is possible and you, yourself, can achieve such heights.

Most of us already have the blessings of Guru Nanak; being born in a Sikh household, food to survive and a roof over our heads. By granting you good health, shelter and food for nourishment – you have no more basic needs to fulfil. The only thing to fulfil according to our Guru is to achieve meditation with every breath.

*The Sikh that takes one step towards the sanctuary
and lotus feet of the Guru
The True Guru advances millions of steps
to receive such a Sikh.*
(Bhai Gurdas Jee, Kabit 111)

He has given you the tools to build your house of meditation - physically. Now you must start the most important construction project of your life - mentally. You must purify your mind and body to build a fortress that cannot be breached by any force or thought of the mind.

The first thing that one should do is to take a step towards Guru Ji. This step can be taken in any way; by simply deciding to go to the Gurdwara on a daily basis, by reading more on Sikh history, by reading Gurbani when we wake up, stop eating meat or drinking alcohol. No matter what your step is, how big or small, we must take some kind of step forward to progress. By taking one step towards Sikhi, Bhai Gurdas Ji tells us:

Now, to build this fortress around our mind we can do two things. Firstly, meditate on the word Vaheguru, this will fix our concentration - Samadhi, this is a state when your consciousness submerges with what you are concentrating on and in this instance you will be in a state in which you can only hear the meditation of the word "Vaheguru" and you will have no knowledge of anything else. Secondly, study, read and contemplate Gurbani - Sikh Scriptures, to purify our minds.

This will basically retrain our mind and intellect in accordance with the Guru's teaching.

Sometimes we can forget the power of Guru Granth Sahib, but we must not forget that Guru Sahib has written the core syllabus of Sikhi themselves.

Sometimes we can struggle to grasp the vast and profound nature of Dhan Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee, but don't worry the benevolent Guru has placed his Sikhs nearby to assist you. Read Bhai Gurdas Jee's Vaars and Kabits, which are the key to Guru Granth Sahib, and if you want to experience the true romance of Sikhi, then you should read Bhai Nand Lal Jee's writings.

So what does all this mean? It means that the above is futile unless you make practical use of them and start to make an effort to take positive steps forward.

The Great Lao Tzu instructs,

"Time is a created thing. To say 'I don't have time' is like saying 'I don't want to.'"

Do you really want to meditate with every breath? Do you really want to be freed from consecutive births/deaths? Or, are you happy to accept your lot and swing on the roundabout of pain and pleasure? Will you let this life pass by or will you do something to make a difference?

It's quite simple – the choice is yours. If you're reading this, then that means you are a human being and this is your chance to make a difference:

*After wandering through 8.4 million lives, you came.
If you stumble and fall now, you shall find no home or place of rest.
(As you will be thrown into the cycle of reincarnation). ||3||*

(Guru Amar Das, Bhaagura, 556)

If you don't make the most of this golden opportunity – then who knows when your next chance will come:

Go out – study hard, learn from learned spiritual Sikhs, make time for meditation and study of Sikhi but at all times learn to watch your mind – restrain and retrain it, with any means necessary.

Now, how can you kick start this process? For starters, you should do more meditation/study of Sikhi than you usually would. Doing this for 10 days, 20 or even 40 days is a great way to go forward, but be careful of common pitfalls:

Don't set strict rules, which are likely to be broken and would lead to you feeling like a failure, set achievable goals, pace yourself, but do make it a little challenging, you know your limits and don't swear an oath or make an Ardas for something you may later regret.

Now good luck on your journey.

He has lost aeons in transmigration, wandering from life form to life form, endlessly. Finally the human body has been obtained.

*Guru Nanak instructs - this is your opportunity to meet the Lord;
Why don't you meditate upon Him? ||2||2||*
(Guru Tegh Bahadur, Sorath, 631)

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blood brothers

The sun was rising and the Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh Ji were preparing for an onslaught ordered by Aurangzeb at the Fort of Chamkaur. In a flash Guru Gobind Singh picks up his bow and arrow and fires a shot towards to outer wall of the fort. It pierces the forehead of a mogul soldier who was climbing the walls. The Singhs see that they are surrounded by hundreds of thousands of Mughal soldiers.

Bhai Daya Singh turns to Guru Gobind Singh and asks, "what shall we do?" Guru Sahib turns to him and says, "Daya Singh, this is the chosen land, the land that has been awaiting us. We will show the world one of the greatest battles they have ever seen. People will see the power of Amrit. Tell the 40 men to prepare themselves". Forty men surrounded by a million.

Suddenly the doors of the fort flew wide open and the first five warriors charge down the field. Slowly gaining speed they drive straight through the enemy clattering thousands along the way. Spears thrown, swords spiralling and blood spilling everywhere, the Battle of Chamkaur has begun! In groups of 5, Singhs armed and prepared by Guru Gobind Singh were sent out to greet the enemy, killing thousands and sacrificing their own lives along the way.

Twenty five warriors of Guru Gobind Singh had now been martyred, upholding righteousness and killing thousands of mogul soldiers. Bhai Daya Singh approaches Guru Gobind Singh again; "Father please I beg you, leave this fort somehow and take your two princes with you.

We can all be martyred here today, but only you can spread the word of God, take your sons, and spread the message of Sikhi across the world, I beg you".

At that point another soldier stepped forward. His presence filled the room, his sword in his hand and wearing his military attire.

"Father I come here for your blessing. The enemy is getting closer to the walls of the fort. Many of your beloved Singhs have given their lives taking thousands along the way. Please let me grace the fields of Chamkaur and allow me the opportunity to show the world that we don't fear death."

Bhai Daya Singh turned, and to his astonishment saw that before his eyes was a tall, handsome 17 year old. His eyes filled with tears, he couldn't believe what he had heard. It was Baba Ajit Singh Ji, the eldest son of Guru Gobind Singh.

Guru Gobind Singh embraced his son, "O my young child. You have the blood of the 5th Guru who sat on a boiling hot plate and your grandfather who saved the Hindu faith by giving his own head. I will ask one thing of you. Once you enter the battlefield, you do not turn your back on the battle. I want to see you fighting for truth against the evil oppressors of this world."

Baba Ajit Singh looked his father in his eyes. "Father, I will work my way through the enemy, upholding your name and truth. When the time comes, if the enemy does defeat me, I promise you, I shall not turn my back on the battle but I will be cut from piece to piece in front of your very eyes."

Bhai Daya Singh fell at the feet of Guru Gobind Singh, eyes filled with tears. "Guru Sahib, please spare your son."

"Bhai Daya Singh, I see no difference in my Sikhs and my sons", said Guru Gobind Singh. "Ajit Singh prepare yourself, Chamkaur awaits you".

Baba Ajit Singh, like a hungry lion after his prey, strides into enemy lines with four of his beloved Sikhs, sending moguls flying and piercing the chests of many with his spear.

"It's the son of Gobind, the son of Gobind, do not let him leave alive" are the screams from Chamkaur. After taking out thousands of the enemy, all of a sudden, his horse takes a blow, a spear to the body and tumbles to the ground. The young Ajit Singh pulls out a sword from its sheath. His speed and control of the blade leave many admiring.

As the sword cuts through many at the speed of lightening it snaps in half. In an instant, hundreds of arrows all pierce the young soldier's chest. The arrows are still striking as the brave warrior continues to lash out at those around him, taking more lives in the process.

The enemy draws closer and Ajit Singh is defeated by his adversaries. The fort was silent. A cold shivering feeling was amongst those left in the fort; they had just seen a 17 year old man cut into pieces.

With a teary eye, a soft spoken voice was heard. "Father please". Guru Gobind Singh looks up and sees Baba Jujhar Singh. His 14 year old son, who had just seen his brother cut into pieces, slowly approaches.

"Jujhar Singh, what is the matter? Are you ok?", asks Guru Gobind Singh.

"Father my brother has just been cut to pieces. I haven't lived a day without him. We rode horses together, we learnt martial arts together, we did everything together, but today he has gone alone without me. Father, bless me that I can follow in the footsteps of my brother", said Jujhar Singh.

"O Jujhar Singh, today you've made me happy. I have one wish of you, that when you blossom on the battlefield, when the enemy strikes down on you, that I can see your face. When that time comes I need to hear the praises of Waheguru from your mouth."

Bhai Daya Singh again fell to the feet of Guru Sahib, "Please Guru Ji, do not send the young one into battle. We are here ready, and waiting. Take him and save yourselves, he shouldn't need to die".

Guru Gobind Singh smiled and said, "Daya Singh, I have told you previously, I see no difference in my Sikhs and my sons".

As Jujhar Singh positioned himself on his horse, Guru Gobind Singh reached into his belt full of armoury, "Here my son, a small weapon to help you along your path. When the enemy gets closer, be sure to take out as many oppressors of justice with this."

The doors to the fort swung open and Jujhar Singh enters the battle, with nothing but the Lord and the thought of defending the fort of his father on his mind. The enemy in sight, as his horse gains speed, hand on his spear, Jujhar Singh lashes out. With bodies flying and the words of the enemy ringing in his ears like an eagle watching its prey the enemy has their eyes firmly on the young warrior. The young and agile brave man weaves through spears and dodging arrows. As he

looks to the ground he sees Ajit Singh lying there, soaked in blood. He kills thousands charging at him; one by one they fall to the ground.

As the sun continues to rise, the arrows hunt Jujhar Singh down, one by one shooting his chest. Remembering the words of his father as the arrows thump into his chest, he turns to the fort, knowing he is breathing his last breath. He turns and smiles, as his father watches.

"Father, I did as you asked. I never turned my back on the enemy, I faced the enemy head on. I didn't let down my grandfather, I AM THE SON OF GURU GOBIND SINGH JI".

Battle of Chamkaur

The background is a vibrant, stylized illustration. It features a bright, glowing sun or light source at the top center, with numerous rays of light radiating downwards in shades of yellow and orange. In the foreground, there are dark, silhouetted figures. On the right, a warrior in traditional attire is shown in a dynamic pose, holding a curved sword. On the left, a large, multi-headed monster or demon is depicted. The overall scene suggests a battle or a heroic confrontation.

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